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**EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS HIRING
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**



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EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS HIRING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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Abstract

Employers' negative attitudes have long been regarded as a main barrier for employment for persons with disabilities. This is because employer attitudes is presumed to relate with the hiring behavior. Thus, this qualitative study was conducted with the intention to explore employers' perception towards hiring persons with disabilities. The study involved semi-structure interview with 10 employers from Klang Valley area who haven't had experience in hiring persons with disabilities. Responses from the respondents indicated that employer are still having negative perception towards person with disabilities. Persons with disabilities are still seen to be helpless who need assistance in doing work, and have limitation in terms of movement, hearing and eyesight. The findings also found that having a policy in hiring persons with disabilities in the workplace does not guarantee that disabled people will be hired. Even if the employers are interested in hiring persons with disabilities, they prefer those who are highly productive; highly independent and possess related qualifications, skills and abilities to perform the given task. Majority of the respondents interviewed also shared that they did not have any experience attending the job coach or return to work program. When asked about the government incentives for those who hired persons with disabilities, majority of them were aware of the incentive and suggested it to be revised and improved. Based on the responses gathered from the interview, several suggestions have been put forward to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the employment. These include revising the current rewards and incentives given to employers who have hired persons with disabilities; promoting awareness among the employers on the positive side of persons with disabilities and giving equal access to persons with disabilities on education and training so that they have the relevant set of skills that are needed by the industries.

Keywords: employment; persons with disabilities; employers' perception; Malaysia

Abstrak

Sikap negatif majikan telah lama dianggap sebagai penghalang kepada peluang untuk pekerjaan bagi orang kurang upaya. Ini adalah kerana sikap majikan telah dianggap mempunyai kaitan dengan gelagat pengambilan. Oleh yang demikian, kajian kualitatif ini dijalankan dengan tujuan untuk meneroka persepsi majikan terhadap pengambilan orang kurang upaya. Kajian ini melibatkan temubual semi struktur bersama 10 majikan daripada Lembah Klang yang tidak pernah menggaji mana-mana pekerja orang kurang upaya sebelum ini. Maklumbalas yang diterima daripada responden menunjukkan bahawa majikan masih lagi mempunyai persepsi yang negatif terhadap orang kurang upaya. Orang kurang upaya masih lagi dilihat lemah yang memerlukan bantuan dalam menjalankan kerja, dan mempunyai batasan dalam pergerakan, pendengaran dan penglihatan. Dapatan juga mendapati bahawa organisasi yang mempunyai polisi dalam pengambilan orang kurang upaya tidak memberi jaminan bahawa golongan ini akan diambil bekerja. Walaupun majikan berminat untuk mengambil pekerja kurang upaya, mereka lebih memilih mereka yang sangat produktif, mampu berdikari dan mempunyai kelayakan, kemahiran dan keupayaan dalam melakukan kerja yang diberi. Kebanyakan responden yang ditemubual menyatakan bahawa mereka tidak mempunyai pengalaman menghadiri program *job coach* atau *return to work*. Apabila ditanya tentang insentif kerajaan bagi organisasi yang ada mengambil pekerja kurang upaya, kebanyakan mereka sedar akan insentif tersebut dan menyarankan agar ianya disemak semula dan ditambahbaik. Berdasarkan kepada maklumbalas yang diperolehi daripada temubual, beberapa cadangan telah diketengahkan bagi meningkatkan penglibatan orang kurang upaya dalam pekerjaan. Ini termasuklah menyemak semula ganjaran dan insentif yang diberikan kepada majikan yang ada menggajikan orang kurang upaya, mempromosi sisi positif orang kurang upaya kepada majikan dan memberi akses yang saksama kepada orang kurang upaya terhadap pendidikan dan latihan agar mereka mempunyai kemahiran yang relevan seperti yang dikehendaki oleh industri.

Kata kunci: pekerjaan; orang kurang upaya; persepsi majikan; Malaysia

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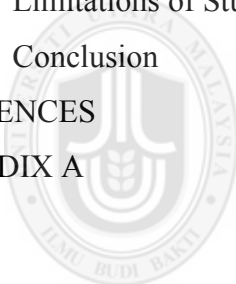
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

For people with disabilities, employment is particularly important, because having a disability often means being socially isolated. Employment provides them with a source of identity, feelings of normality, financial support, and socialization. Thus, being able to be employed will reduce this isolation and the most importantly is to reduce poverty.

However, job participating among the disabled in Malaysia still remain as a complex issue. With the emergence of information and communication technology, the field of employment for persons with disabilities should have changed and created a new horizon for the disabled where they can work from home. But, sadly, the reality showed that the number of disabled employed in public and private sectors are still remain low. This is worsened when the unemployment rates for persons without disabilities are high as many of these people can work and want to work. Apart from that, the job requirements in the workplace have increased or changed due to changes in the technology. Particularly the requirements on social skills expanded considerably and make it increasingly difficult for workers with disabilities to perform competently. Therefore, a proper measure and intervention are needed to prepare and make the disabled people ready for work. By uncovering the opinions and perceptions from employers regarding this employment issues, a better picture on the kind of improvement needed can be taken.

1.2 Problem Statement

In Malaysia, many initiatives have been taken to improve the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce. These include a policy of 1% job opportunities in the public sector for persons with disabilities; vocational and skills trainings at *Pusat Latihan Perindustrian dan Pemulihan (PLPP)* Bangi; employment opportunities for persons with disabilities who are not able to compete in the current labor market at *Bengkel Terlindung (Bengkel Daya, Klang, Selangor and Bengkel Daya, Sg. Petani, Kedah)*; recuperative programs at *Pusat Pemulihan Dalam Komuniti (PDK)*; providing allowances – *Elaun Pekerja Cacat (EPC)* to employed persons with disabilities with a monthly salary of RM1200 and below; and the development and wellbeing of persons with disabilities such as the Job Coach, Disability Equality Training and Independent Living Programs.

Apart from that, Ministry of Human Resources also helps person with disabilities in ensuring equal opportunities in employment through their programs such as Return to Work and job carnival. The SOCSO Rehabilitation Center Malacca is established as a way to restore lost skills due to accidents and to improve persons with disabilities ability to work and be independent.

Realizing the importance of good education for persons with disabilities, Ministry of Higher Education has played a proactive role in fulfilling this vision. Through community college and polytechnic, various courses that suit persons with disabilities' capabilities are offered to enhance employability skills.

Despite all the efforts and initiatives taken by the Malaysian government in helping persons with disabilities to participate in the workforce, the number of working disabled are still very low. For example, in 2014, only 13% of the registered persons with disabilities are working. Despite the policy of 1% job opportunities, only 2985 persons with disabilities are found working till May 2015 (Statistik pekerjaan dan perburuhan Kementerian Sumber Manusia, 2015). Statistic in 2017 also showed that the participation of persons with disabilities in the public sector is still low where only 0.24% of the 1.6 million government servants is persons with disabilities (BHonline, 2017).

Reasons for the low participation of persons with disabilities in the workplace have been put forward in the literature and these include barriers to access education, information, transport, built environment, as well as cultural and media representations and late diagnosis of disabilities, deprived their opportunities to attend formal schooling or vocational training (Bruyere, 2000; Garske & Stewart, 1999; Hamad, 2007; Marrone & Golowka, 1999; Norani *et al.*, 2001; Pratt *et al.*, 1999; Ramakrishnan, 2007; Roessler, 2002; Stacher & Hendren, 1992; Wright & Multon, 1995).

The marginalization of the disabled people in the labor market is also contributed by the role of their family (Bualar, 2014; Lee *et al.*, 2011). Generally, families are overprotective of their disabled children. Even when they have reached mature age that requires them to be independent, their families view the disabled children as fragile and impose false hope that their children would neither be able to do the job nor join the labor force.

In other writings, there are authors who have relate the issues of employment among persons with disabilities with the attitude of employers. Employers are said not familiar and sensitive with the needs of their disabled employees (Khoo, *et al.*, 2013; Tiun and Khoo, 2013); are concerned about productivity, demand for supervision, and promotability of workers with disabilities, as well as the cost of accommodating their needs (Johnson, Greenwood & Schriner, 1988); unwillingness of the organization to provide accommodations that suite their needs, negative perception by the organization, inappropriate jobs, and limited mobility access are among causes for PWDs to be marginalized in the labor market (Berthoud, 2008; Coffey, Coufopoulos, & Kinghorn, 2014; Hoque *et al.*, 2014; Ta & Leng, 2013).

Though there are studies been conducted in the past to uncover the issues of employment among persons with disabilities, not many studies are focusing on capturing the views of employers who are not hiring persons with disabilities. Majority of past studies are seeking opinions and views from employers who have experience hiring persons with disabilities when discussing the issues of employment. Beside, majority of the theories of persons with disabilities are developed based on a western perspective (Walsh *et al.*, 2014; Bruyere, 2000; Garske & Stewart, 1999; Marrone & Golowka, 1999; Pratt *et al.*, 1999; Roessler, 2002; Stacher & Hendren, 1992; Wright & Multon, 1995) and only a few studies were based on a Malaysian context (Ang & Ramayah, 2015; Khoo *et al.*, 2013; Tiun & Khoo, 2013; Ta & Leng, 2013; Lee *et al.*, 2011; Norani *et al.*, 2001). Since it is important to explore and understand the real reasons for not hiring persons with disabilities, this study is conducted with the intention to explore employers perception towards hiring persons with disabilities and the real reasons behind their reluctantness in hiring this group of people.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on the above discussion on the issue of employment among persons with disabilities, the main research question is “*what is employers’ perception towards hiring persons with disabilities?*” Specifically, the research is interested to address the following questions:

- what do organizations understand about persons with disabilities?
- why organization are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities?
- do organizations have intention to hire persons with disabilities?

1.4 Research Objectives

To answer the research questions posted above, the following research objectives were formulated:

1. to explore organizations understanding on persons with disabilities;
2. to capture reasons why organizations are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities; and
3. to explore whether organizations have any intention to hire persons with disabilities

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings from this study would contribute to both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, the potential findings from this study will contribute to the current body of knowledge on employment and persons with disabilities. Furthermore,

this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing empirical support on the reasons why organizations are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities. It is hope that the findings would benefits both scholars and researchers with the same interest.

Practically, the findings of the study may also provide an effective contribution to the government, parents with disabled children and society on how to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce. This study will provide empirical evidence on the reasons why employers are reluctant to employ persons with disabilities. Thus, by understanding the real reasons why organization are not hiring persons with disabilities, the right action can be taken. This is a broader contribution that extends beyond the Malaysian context.

1.6 Scope of Study

The main focus of this study is explore employers' perception towards hiring persons with disabilities. The study intend to capture reasons why many organizations are not employing persons with disabilities. Thus, the respondents of this study are those organization that do not have any experience in hiring persons with disabilities. The respondents are chosen from the Klang Valley area. This area is chosen for practical and economic reasons. Since the study intends to capture respondents' perception towards hiring persons with disabilities, a qualitative approach was used where a semi-structured interview was conducted as a mean of gathering information.

1.7 Organization of Chapters

This chapter is the first of five chapters in this dissertation. Chapter 2 gives general overview of past literature on persons with disabilities and employment. Issues faced by persons with disabilities are also presented. The chapter ends with past empirical findings on employers' perception towards hiring persons with disabilities and reasons why organization are not hiring them.

Chapter 3 described method for the study, namely the research design and research sampling. The chapter also reports the development of interview protocol and the interview process. Chapter 3 ends with a brief description on the strategies and procedures that were used to analyze the data collected from the interview.

Chapter 4 reports the results of the study. Reports on the descriptive statistical analysis of the respondents' profiling were presented. The chapter also discussed the interpretation of the research findings for the study. The findings were compared to previous studies conducted.

Chapter 5 presents the recommendation and suggestions in increasing the participation of persons with disabilities in employment and implications of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion on limitations of the study and some suggestions for future study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature from past studies on employers' perception towards hiring persons with disabilities. The discussions begin with understanding

2.2 Disabilities and Persons with Disabilities – the Definition

Many definitions of disabilities and persons with disabilities have been put forward in the literature. For example, World Health Organization (WHO) defines disabilities as:

- i. impairments – problems in body function or structure;
- ii. activity limitations – intricacies faced by an individual in accomplishing a task or action; and
- iii. restriction in participation – problems experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations

According to WHO (2011), disability involves complicated situations that reveals the association between facets of an individual and the society in which the individual lives. Thus, interventions from the government, communities, and NGOs are required to eliminate barriers faced by persons with disabilities in terms of access to health, education and employment.

In the United Nations system, the Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (SCRPD) has been set up within the Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) as the focal point on disability (United Nations Enable, 2015). The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is a worldwide treaty that recognizes the rights of persons with disabilities and the responsibilities of relevant parties in promoting, protecting and ensuring those rights. The Convention has also provide various steps that must be taken to create an environment that persons with disabilities can enjoy real equality in the society.

However, CRPD does not specifically define the terms “disability” or “persons with disabilities”. But, the fundamentals of the preamble and Article 1 provide a guideline to clarify the application of the terms in the Convention. The preamble defines disability as a concept that results from the interaction between persons with disabilities and the attitudinal and environmental barriers that deter their participation on an equal basis with others. On the other hand, persons with disabilities are those individuals who have long-term impairments either physically, mentally, intellectuality or sensory, and who are unable to participate actively and fully on an equal basis with others due to the existence of various barriers (United Nations Enable, 2015).

In response to CRPD, the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific 2013-2022 has been developed (UN, 2012). The Incheon Strategy has outlines 10 goals towards achieving an inclusive, barrier-free, and rights-based society for persons with disabilities in Asia and the Pacific region. The main aim of the Incheon Strategy is to reduce poverty, enhance work and employment

prospects thus strengthening the economic status amongst persons with disabilities in the region.

In Malaysia, the term “disabled persons” is clearly defined in the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 as “those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society”. Kocak and Kavi (2010) defined disability as the consequence of various types of impairments which have significant and adverse effects on a person’s ability to carry out normal daily activities. In other writing, Hernandez (2000) refers disabled people as a person who suffers from health difficulties like Alzheimer, autism, mental retardation, using walker and wheelchair. Bickenbach, Chattrji, Badley and Ustun (1999) argued that disability is caused by disease, trauma or health impairment that can be cured through particular treatment. They also further argue that disability can affect a person in different ways and limit a person performance in conducting common tasks and tasks related to family, work, society, school and self-care within a socio-cultural and physical environment. In their writing, they classify disabilities into several categories and these include vision, hearing, thinking, learning, mental health, movement and communication.

In Malaysia, the Department of Social Welfare Malaysia (<http://www.jkm.gov.my>) has classified disabilities into seven categories and they are:

1. Hearing impairment: The inability to hear clearly in both ears without the use of hearing aids or inability to hear completely even with the use of hearing aids. Hearing impaired can be divided into four stages, namely:

- i. Minimum 15 - <30dB (kids) or 20 - < 30dB (adults)
- ii. Medium 30 - <60dB
- iii. Severe 60 - <90dB
- iv. Profound ≥ 90 dB

2. Visual impairment: Those who suffer blindness in either one eye, both eyes, limited vision in both eyes or other permanent vision problems. Visually impaired can be divided into:

- i. Limited – vision worse than 6/18 but equal to or better than 3/60 even by using vision aid appliance, or visual field of less than 20 degrees from fixation.
- ii. Blind – vision less than 3/60 or visual field of less than 10 degrees from fixation.
- iii. Other permanent vision problems (can only be confirmed by an ophthalmologist)

3. Speech impairment: The inability to speak that results from communication disorders and cannot be understood by others who interact with them. This is a permanent condition and will not heal. For children with this condition, the assessments must be made by the age of five and above by the Otorhinolaryngology experts.

4. Physical disability: Individual who suffers from permanent disability of part of the body whether by the loss or absence or inability of any part of the body that can affect their full function in basic activities such as self-care, mobility and changing

the position of the body. This condition can occur as a result of injury (trauma) or disease in any of the central nervous system, cardiovascular, respiratory, hematology, immunology, hepatobiliary, musculoskeletal, gynecological, and others that can cause malfunction. Also, it is caused by limb defects (congenital/acquired) such as loss of thumb, spinal cord injury, stroke, traumatic brain injury, dwarf (achondroplasia) and cerebral palsy.

5. Learning disabilities: The problem of intelligence that is not consistent with the biological age. Those who fall into this category are those with Global Development Delay (GDD), Down Syndrome and intellectual disabilities. Also, those with conditions that affect the ability of individuals such as autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and specific learning disabilities (such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia).
6. Mental: A state of severe mental illness which cause a person to be incapable of working, whether in part or in full in respect of himself or relationship in the community. Some example of mental illnesses include serious and chronic organic mental disorder, Schizophrenia, paranoid, mood disorder (depression, bipolar) and persistent delusional disorders. Those with mental illness must be under psychiatric treatment for at least two years. The psychiatrist will assess and determine the level of social functioning, cognitive and behavioral control as significant or severe to be considered for persons with disabilities registration.
7. Multiple disabilities: Those who are suffering from more than one type of disability.

2.3 Issues of Employment and Persons with Disabilities

Employment is something that many persons with disabilities are waiting for. Employment opportunities and income sources are important element in ensuring persons with disabilities are able to live independently without relying on others for help. As argued by Serajul Haq (2003), employment symbolizes liberty and equal opportunity for persons with disabilities. Besides, their participation and access to employment is a fundamental right for them too. Serajul Haq added that employment for persons with disabilities is significant for three major motives: (a) it signifies economic independence and solid source of income; (b) it represents a sense of self-esteem and self-respect; and (c) it indicates acceptance and integration into the mainstream of non-disabled community and acknowledgement of their contribution to the society. Despite the fact that employment is important for persons with disabilities, little success has been achieved. In fact, employers' negative perception and attitude towards persons with disabilities are still persists (Kilbury, Benshoff, & Rubun, 1992).

Apart from that, discrimination among persons with disabilities are still remain. Persons with disabilities are being discriminated in many areas such as education, transportation, built environment, as well as in communication and media. In addition, they are also being discriminated in the workplace (Ravaud, Madiot, & Ville, 1992; Smith Randolph, 2005). Smith Randolph (2005) found that similar types of discrimination towards persons with disabilities in the workforce that include little opportunities for career advancement, low performance expectation and monitoring from the supervisor, and unfriendly workplace limited the movement of persons with

disabilities in the organization. Lower wages and benefits received by the persons with disabilities was also another form of discrimination.

Schur, Kruse, Blasi and Blanck (2009) also found that persons with disabilities face a number of important disparities at work, including lower pay and benefits, less job security, higher levels of supervision, lower participation in job and department decisions, and lower levels of company-sponsored formal training and informal training from coworkers. In other writing, Ravaud, Madiot and Ville (1992) found that discrimination against job applicant on the basis of disability was higher among the larger organizations. Similar findings were also found in Barnes (2003) studies where disabled people are suffering on rejection from the workplace due to their impairment, long term sickness and lack of ability when compared to persons without disabilities. These discriminations led to frustration and low self-esteem among persons with disabilities.

The literature also have shown how exclusion of persons with disabilities from employment opportunities is linked to the social organization of the labor market and not because of individual impairment. In one article, Ramakrishnan (2007) has argued that organizational commitment to employment of the disabled, attitude towards disabled people, and organizational policies on persons with disabilities are critical in determining the employment opportunities for the disabled. Barriers such as access to education, information, transport, built environment, as well as cultural and media representations have been claimed to be the cause for low participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce.

In a study conducted by Tiun and Khoo (2013) and Khoo, *et al.*, (2013), they found that most employers in general were unfamiliar with and insensitive to the needs of their employees with disability. In fact, employers are found not providing a disability-friendly physical infrastructures in the workplace which limit the movements of employees with disability. The findings further showed that compared to government agencies, private sector was more concerned about meeting the needs of persons with disabilities. Khoo *et al.*, (2013) in their study have highlighted two critical factors, namely unconducive environment and workplace barriers, as the obstacles which impeded persons with disabilities from entering and progressing in the workplace.

Barnes (2005) on the other hand, argued that having specific policy in the field of employment alone will not be enough to solve this issue unless those barriers are lifted. Apart from providing disability friendly facilities at the workplace and policy related to employment, Hamad (2007) argued that full access to educational opportunities to learn needed skills is the first step in achieving social integration and ensuring equal employment opportunities. Since many employers today are looking for applicant with the right skills and knowledge, persons with disabilities need to be given equal opportunities for education. As argued by Norani, Khalid and Nor Aishah (2001), persons with disabilities have many hidden potentials and resources, and thus, they should be given job opportunities and training in order to fully integrate themselves in the society at large.

Past studies also have shown how employer perceptions toward the disabled workforce being a significant barrier to the employment of persons with disabilities. Research showed that though applicants with disabilities are evaluated more positively during

hiring process, they are still less likely to be hired than candidates without disabilities (Tagalakakis, Amsel & Fichten, 1988). Particularly, employers were worried about productivity, demand for supervision, and promotability of workers with disabilities, as well as the cost of accommodating their needs (Johnson, Greenwood & Schriener, 1988). Similarly, Shier, John and Marion (2009) also found that the most frequent reported barrier to social inclusion was public attitudes and prejudices concerning disabled people.

In addition, other than the disabled's impairment, unwillingness of the organization to provide accommodations that suite their needs, negative perception by the organization, inappropriate jobs, and limited mobility access are among causes for persons with disabilities to be marginalized in the labor market (Berthoud, 2008; Coffey, Coufopoulos, & Kinghorn, 2014; Hoque *et al.*, 2014; Ta & Leng, 2013).

The marginalization of the disabled people in the labor market is also contributed by the role of their family (Bualar, 2014; Lee et al., 2011). The participation of parents are regarded as crucial in preparing persons with disabilities for employment. Sadly, families in general are found to be overprotective of their disabled children. Even when their disabled children have reached mature age that requires them to be independent, the families still view the disabled children as fragile and impose false hope that their children would neither be able to do the job nor join the labor force.

Apart from the issue of getting access to education, training is another concern that related to persons with disabilities. Training is very important to help individuals to increase knowledge, skills, and ability in performing jobs. Yet, persons with disabilities

are often being denied to receive the same training opportunity compared to other employees. As argued by Anizam, Manisah and Amla, (2014), training appears to play significant roles in helping disabled persons to be employed. However, Pagan (2015) found that their participation in training activity is limited compared to non-disabled person. Poor facilities, outdated syllabus, and lack of skills demonstrated by the trainer contribute to this problem (Malle, Pirttimaa, Saloviita, 2015). Even though it is the role of organization to provide training for their disabled employees, many organizations are unsure whether their disabled employees should receive the same training opportunity as non-disabled employees or is the training is a part of social responsibility. If these issues failed to be addressed by the respective authorities, organization or training center, disabled persons will not be able to develop or enhance their skills that will decrease their chances to fully participate at the workplace.

2.4 Reasons why Organizations are not Hiring Persons with Disabilities

In the literature, various reasons on why employer are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities have been widely been put forward. Even though employers may not admit the real reasons that keep them from hiring persons with disabilities, Peck and Kirkbride (2001) argued that the primary reason is due to fear. In their article, they have highlighted four kind of fears that concern the employers. First is the fear of the cost associated with hiring. Many employers believed that they need to spend a large amount of money if they were to hire persons with disabilities such as providing them with accommodation, facilities and renovation to accommodate the disabled. Second is the fear of additional supervision and loss of productivity. Employers are worried about the need to give special attention such as the amount of time the supervisor would need to

commit to disabled employees at the workplace. Apart from that, employers are also concerned about the productivity of the disabled employees and often perceived that they have to come out with two different productivity standard. The third fear is fear of being stuck forever with their disabled employees. Many employers have the general feelings that persons with disabilities are protected class who cannot be terminated if they failed to perform the essential functions of the job. The fourth fear is the fear of damaged good. Many employers do not want to be seen by the community as doing charity when hiring persons with disabilities but would like to be seen as the right thing to do.

Kaye, Jans and Jones (2011) in their study on human resources professionals and managers working at ADA – recalcitrant organizations who attended ADA or other disability-related trainings provided by DBTAC-Pacific ADA Center its affiliates, found that the three highest reasons on why employers might not hire persons with disabilities are related to cost of accommodations, lack of awareness as to how to deal with workers with disabilities and their accommodation needs and fear of being stuck with a worker who cannot be disciplined or fired because of the possibility of lawsuit. They also found that 70% of the respondents indicate reasons such as difficulty in assessing an applicant's ability to perform job, concerns over extra supervisory time, worries on other cost, concern that persons with disabilities won't perform as well as persons without disability employees and lack of job applicants with disabilities for not hiring persons with disabilities.

Gordon (2018) in his article has highlighted several reasons why employers are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities. He found that most employers are reluctant

to hire persons with disabilities because they do not have the accommodation for the disabled employees, they requires applicant with specific expertise, worries about the requirement for extensive job modifications, too risky to hire persons with disabilities, only hiring for specific disabilities and hiring persons with disabilities did not give any business benefits.

In short, employers are still have the negative perception on persons with disabilities which limit the participation of these marginal group from entering the workforce. Despite the empirical evidence showing how persons with disabilities are being productive, reliable, hardworking and loyal, the reality shows that employers are still skeptical in hiring these group of people. Instead of focusing on the strength and the ability of disabled persons, employers are still focusing on their impairment.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the literature reviewed for the study. A summary of information pertaining to disabled people was based on review of literature of employer's perceptions towards person with disabilities. This section of this chapter also consists of the explanation on why employers refuse to employ disabled people in their organization. In the next chapter, case study research as the methodology of choice for the research is explored. An overview of case study research, an analysis of its use and a rationale for its appropriateness for the investigation on employer's perception towards persons with disabilities.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 describes the method for the study. In this chapter, the research design, the research sampling, the interview protocol and the interview process are discussed. The chapter ends with strategies for analyzing the data.

3.2 Research Design

This study utilized qualitative research design. As argued by past researchers, qualitative method facilitate the study of issues in depth, without imposing pre-existing notions on the research setting (Patton, 2002; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Given the need to explore the range of views on hiring persons with disabilities in Malaysia, a guided semi-structured interview was employed as a data collection method. According to Edwards and Holland (2013), semi-structured interview is when the researcher has a list of questions or series of topics that they want to cover in the interview namely, an interview guide and there is flexibility in how and when the questions are put and how the interviewee can respond.

In other writing, Bachiochi and Weiner (2002) argued that semi-structured interviews give the research participant the opportunity to explain their feelings more fully, able to provide interpretations not anticipated by the researchers and provide an opportunity to obtain depth and richness of data than what is typically gained from questionnaire

surveys. Among the strengths of semi-structured interview as a data collection method include it can uncover participants' perspectives, assist participants to describe complex interactions, and can help in gaining an understanding of the research problem without imposing prior existing notions on the research (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Grbich, 1999). In this study, participants were asked about their opinions in hiring persons with disabilities.

3.3 Research Sampling

Participants of this study are employers who do not have any experience in hiring persons with disabilities. The sample of interviewees was drawn from the population of employers in the Klang Valley area. This area is chosen for practical and economical reason. For this study, the maximum diversity sampling was employed and it is one that recommended when doing unstructured, semi-structured or in-depth interviews (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1995; Patton, 2002). This sampling approach is enhanced through snowball sampling mechanism where those who have been interviewed were asked to identify others who might be different from them and who they thought might be interested in participating in this study (Patton, 2002). Snowball sampling which is also known as chain-referral is a non-probability (non-random) sampling method used when characteristics to be possessed by samples are rare and difficult to find. Among the advantages of using snowball sampling are its' ability to recruit hidden populations, cost effective, takes little time to complete and little planning to start primary data collection process. For this study, the first subject recruited provides multiple referrals. Each referral is then explored until the primary data from sufficient amount of samples are collected.

For this study, the sampling frame required a sufficient number of participants in order to achieve “saturation point” which is, for it to become evident that any additional participants would be simply repeating what others have reported (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Lofland & Lofland, 1984; Richards, 2005; Robson, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.4 Development of Interview Protocol

The interview questions were developed based on the research objectives and literature on employment and persons with disabilities. Generally, the questions that were asked during the interview are guided and centered on the perceptions of employers towards hiring persons with disabilities, reasons for not hiring persons with disabilities and their intention of hiring persons with disabilities in the future. All the interview materials were prepared in English as professional-level workers in Malaysia can and often do work in English. Details interview protocol developed for this study are presented in Appendix A.

3.5 The Interview Process

The interview process begins on November 2017 and ends in December 2017. At the end of the interview process, a total of 10 employers were interviewed. Though the number of employers participated in this study is small, the information gathered were depth enough and credibly attested to adequately provide conclusive evidences for the study. All the interview sessions were conducted outside of the organization and in a very informal way. Before the interview process begins, each interviewee was briefed

about the study and the procedure involved. During the interview, opinions shared by respondents were further explored with the aid of probing and follow-up questions. Each respondent was assured that all information given will remain confidential at all times and will be used for the study only. The interviews lasted approximately one hour. In this study, all interviews were not audio-taped as the respondents were feeling uncomfortable for being taped. Only note-taking was allowed throughout the interview sessions.

3.6 Technique of Data Analysis

All responses collected from the interview were transcribed and scrutinized very closely. Each item was coded using open coding, and allowed categories and themes to develop and emerge without selective attention to points of particular interest (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). As the coding progressed, additional categories were identified and added to the coding guide, using the same process. Upon completion of the coding activity, the researchers proceeded to the next level of analysis, whilst comparing and contrasting the categories to discover the relationship between them. The aim of this second level of analysis was to collapse the categories into themes and sub-themes by locating patterns that were consistent in the data set. Once the codes and categories were derived from the text, the patterns were then compared across interview transcripts. This started with open coding, then clustering the codes into families of concepts or categories and finally capturing emergent themes from the clusters or codes. This step took place to capture the concepts linking the thematic material in order to make an attempt of the final thematic conceptualization analysis. The themes were then arranged in a hierarchical manner into major and minor themes.

3.7 Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the research method and strategy for the study. It described the research sampling, the development of interview protocol and the interview process. This chapter also briefly explains the strategy of transcribing the interview. Responses given by the respondents during the interview will be presented and discussed in the next chapter, Chapter 4.



CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports and discusses responses captured from the respondents during the interview. The chapter begins with an overview of the organization profile. It then followed by discussion on responses given by the employers.

4.2 Organization's Profile

Detailed descriptive statistics of the organization's profile are presented in Table 4.1. It is noted that majority of organizations (80%) interviewed are from the services industry. In terms of total employees employed, none of the organization has hired part-time employees. Majority of the organizations (70%) hired between 401 and 600 full-time employees. All the organizations participated in this study are located in the area of Klang Valley.

Table 4.1
Organization's profile (n=10)

Description	Frequency	Percentage
Types of industry:		
Manufacturing	2	20
Services	8	80
Total number of employees:		
Part –time:	0	0

Full-time		
1 – 200	2	20
201 - 400	0	0
401 - 600	7	70
601 - 800	1	10
Location:		
KlangValley	10	100

4.3 Responses from Employers

This section discussed the responses gathered from 10 employers regarding their perception towards hiring persons with disabilities such as their understanding on persons with disabilities, policy related to hiring persons with disabilities, reasons for not hiring persons with disabilities, employers' participation in the job coach and return to work program, employees awareness towards government incentives and employers future intention in hiring persons with disabilities.

4.3.1 Employers' Understanding on Person with Disabilities.

The interview session begins with employers' understanding of persons with disabilities. Based on the responses given, respondents' general understanding of persons with disabilities are still negative where they view them as those who need assistance in doing work. Respondents also view persons with disabilities as those with limitation in movement, hearing, and eyesight; a person who are struggling even to

cross a road (e.g., blind people) and those who are on the wheelchair. As highlighted by several respondents during the interview,

“...someone with a physical disability whereby the movement is limited and unstable while standing and working...” [R1]

“...for me, person with disability is someone who is blind or deaf...” [R2]

“... what cross my mind is someone in a wheelchair...” [R7]

Based on the current findings, persons with disabilities are still been label as person who are helpless and needed help from others. In order to able the disabled, support from the communities are needed. Parents with disabled child also need to train their disabled child to be independent and not being too protective of them. The image of persons with disabilities also need to be promoted in a positive way by highlighting their strength and ability.

4.3.2 Policy Related to Hiring Persons with Disabilities

During the interview, respondents were asked whether they have a policy on hiring persons with disabilities or not. Interestingly, half of the respondents shared that they do have policy on hiring persons with disabilities even though they do not hire any. As shared by the respondents,

“... yes, my company has a policy related to persons with disabilities...” [R5]

“...yes, we have...we just put it in our policy the last 2 or 3 years...” [R1]

The current findings indicate that having policy per se did not guarantee that persons with disabilities will be hired. Reasons for not hiring persons with disabilities need to explore further, despite of having a policy in place. It is assuming that by having a policy in hiring persons with disabilities will help increase the number of disabled employees in the work place. But the current findings prove the opposite.

4.3.3 Reasons for not Employing Persons with Disabilities

Since majority of the respondents have policy on hiring persons with disabilities and yet, they do not hired any of persons with disabilities, it is interesting to capture their reasons for not doing it. By understanding the real reasons for this might help the relevant agencies to come out with ways in promoting persons with disabilities.

When respondents were asked reasons for not hiring persons with disabilities, the most popular reasons shared by respondents are related to the ability of persons with disabilities to carry the given task. Most employers are looking for candidates who are highly productive; possess related qualifications, skills and abilities to perform given task; and who are highly independent. In other words, employers are concerned about disabled employees' work performance. As shared by one of the respondents,

“... we are concerns on disabled employees performance...” [R10]

There are also respondents who gave reasons related to the nature of work and the ability of persons with disabilities to perform those work. As highlighted by the respondents,

“...our company is a trading and communication’s company ... need a person who can drive, able to work at any time, willing to travel and work independently... it is hard to hire persons with disabilities...” [R8]

“...disabled persons would not have the freedom of movement to access workplace, visit clients or get around...” [R9]

In short, the current findings indicate that employers are still looking for candidate that possess high qualification, high ability to deliver work given, have working experience, have strong memory and can make quick decision which limit the opportunity for the persons with disabilities. Thus, persons with disabilities need to equip themselves with the right skills and knowledge that are needed by the industries before they can be considered to be hired.

4.3.4 Participation in the Job Coach / Return to Work (SOCISO) Program

Employers were also asked about their participation in job coach or return to work program. Based on the interview, majority of them did not have any experience participating in job coach or return to work program. One of the reasons given by one of the respondent is that they did not hire persons with disabilities, and thus, they do not think it is important to attend such program. In the respondent own word,

“...since my company doesn't have OKU, so have not attended any training provided related to OKU...” [R4]

Another reason given during the interview was that they are not being exposed to such program. In short, the current findings indicate that most of the employers were not aware of such programs. Thus, more aggressive effort needs to be taken by related agencies such Labor Department, Department of Social Welfare and Social Security Organization in advocating, planning and promoting the programs.

4.3.5 Employers Awareness towards Government Incentives in Hiring Persons with Disabilities

During the interview, respondents were also asked about the government incentives in hiring persons with disabilities. Out of 10 employers interviewed, 8 of them are aware about these incentives. However, they suggest that the government should provide attractive incentives with higher amount to organizations that have hired significant number of persons with disabilities. As commented by two of the respondents,

“...government should provide more incentives to companies that hired significant number of disabled people...” [R1]

“...developing clear strategies to address concerns about the costs and risk associated with persons with disabilities as employees in the open workplace.”
[R5]

“...Yes, we are aware...for me the incentive only is not enough...” [R7]

Apart from that the respondents also shared that they did not receive enough information regarding the incentives provided to employers who have hired persons with disabilities. As shared by one of the respondents,

“...Yes, our company is aware...I think we require to know more about the double tax deduction...” [R4]

These findings indicate that more effort is needed in promoting the incentives provided by the government to the employers. Also, the findings indicated that the existing incentives should be revised in order to attract more employers to hire persons with disabilities. One size fits all incentives were no longer relevant in today's context where different categories of persons with disabilities have different kind of challenges and needs. Thus, the government should initiate and conduct discussions with employers to gain inputs on the kind of incentives that attract the employers.

4.3.6 Employers Future Intention in Hiring Persons with Disabilities

The interview session ends with a question on whether the employers have any intention of hiring persons with disabilities in the future. Interestingly 4 of the respondents interviewed firmly shared that they will not hire persons with disabilities. Among the highest reasons these respondents gave include it will cost them more if they are to hire persons with disabilities, and they did not have any suitable job for persons with disabilities. As shared by one respondent,

“...employing disabled people is difficult and it cost more...” [R9]

These findings confirm previous studies on the reasons why organizations are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities. As argued by Peck and Kirkbride (2001), many employers believed that they need to spend lots of money if they were to hire PWDs such as providing them with accommodation, facilities and renovation to accommodate the disabled. Kaye, Jans and Jones (2011) also found that one of the three highest reasons why employers might not hire PWDs is related to cost of accommodations.

During the interview, three respondents indicate that they might give it a thought about hiring persons with disabilities in the future. Even if the respondents do not have any problem in hiring persons with disabilities, they only hire those who can fit with their working environment and the organization does not need to do any changes in accommodating them. As stated by one of the respondents,

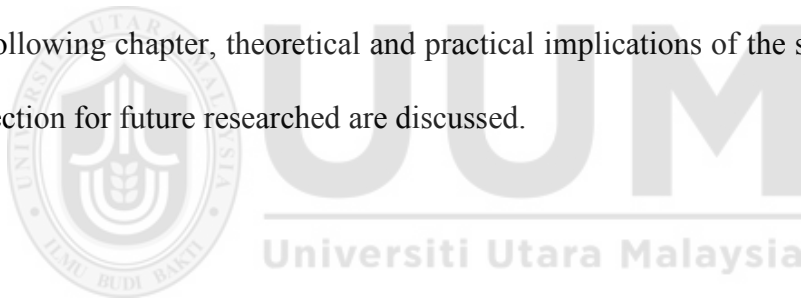
“It would not be a problem for us to take them if they could fit with our working environment and work requirements and as long as the company does not have to change anything in the office.” [R6]

This finding supported previous study conducted by Unger (2002) where one of the factors that might affect employer attitudes to hire persons with disabilities was the type and / or severity of the disability of the employee or applicant. Since persons with hearing impairment were physically normal, they were seen to be fit to work compared to other categories of persons with disabilities. In fact, less renovation to accommodate their needs was required. Thus, persons with disabilities, in this category were more favorable to be hired by the employers.

Another three respondents indicate that they are looking forward on hiring persons with disabilities in the future but it will depend on vacancies, types of job available and facilities that they have in accommodating disabled employees. Although the respondents are looking forward in hiring persons with disabilities, they preferred those with the right skills and qualities needed by the organization. In other words, the disabled candidate must be ready for work. They are also prefer those with moderate intellectual ability.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed findings from the interview conducted with 10 employers. In the following chapter, theoretical and practical implications of the study, limitation and direction for future researched are discussed.



CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 summarized the findings discussed in Chapter 4. Implication of the study, limitation and direction for future studies are also discussed.

5.2 Summary of Research Findings

The main aim of this qualitative study is to explore employers' perceptions towards hiring persons with disabilities. By gaining new insight on reasons why employers are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities can give us some understanding on the issues of employment among persons with disabilities. The current study employed qualitative approach where data were collected through semi-structured interview with employers who do not have any experience in hiring persons with disabilities.

Responses gathered through the interview indicate that persons with disabilities are still been portray in a negative way. They are still been regard as a person with limitation in movement, hearing and eyesight and those who are still in need of an assistance in doing work. Though half of the respondents have policy related to hiring persons with disabilities, interestingly none of them have hired one. Among the reasons shared by the respondents during the interview on the reasons they are not hiring persons with disabilities include their organizations are looking for highly productive candidates; possess related qualifications, skills and abilities to perform given task and who are

highly independent. There are also respondents who shared that the nature of job at their organization is not suitable for persons with disabilities.

When respondents were asked about their involvement in job coach or return to work program, majority of them did not have any experience participating in such program. One of the reasons given is because they do not hire any persons with disabilities in their organization, and thus, they do not find it important for them to participate. In terms of incentives given by the government for those organization that have hired persons with disabilities, many shared that they are aware about the incentives. However, they argued that the incentive given is not attractive where the amount should be increased especially for those organizations that have hired significant number of disabled employees. Apart from that, they also suggest that more information regarding the incentives should be shared with the employers.

Finally, when respondents were asked whether they have any intention to hire persons with disabilities in the future, four of the respondents shared that they are not interested in hiring them as they fear that the cost of hiring will be higher. Another reason given is that they do not have suitable job for persons with disabilities. Three respondents indicate that they might give a thought about hiring persons with disabilities, while the other three respondents are looking forward to hire persons with disabilities. Though the respondents are interested in hiring persons with disabilities, they are still preferred those with the right skills and qualities needed by the organization.

5.3 Research Implications

5.3.1 Theoretical Implications

The current findings make several contributions to the research literature on employment and persons with disabilities. First, the issues of employment among persons with disabilities are explored through employers who do not have any experience in hiring persons with disabilities. Through this study, employers' perception towards hiring persons with disabilities are captured. The findings indicate that employers who are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities do have negative perception towards this group of people where they believed that persons with disabilities have the limitation in movement, hearing and eyesight; and need assistance in doing work.

Apart from that, the present study also offer important insight contributed to the body of knowledge on persons with disabilities and employment by capturing reasons why organizations are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities. Responses gathered through the interview indicate that employers are reluctant to hire persons with disabilities because they are looking for candidate that possess high qualification, high ability to deliver work given, have working experience, have strong memory and can make quick decision. This empirical findings indicate that persons with disabilities need to equip themselves with the necessary skills needed by the industries if they want to be hired.

5.3.2 Practical Implications

Based on the current findings, the following are some of the recommendations to increase the participation of persons with disabilities in employment. The results demonstrate that both employers and persons with disabilities need to take initiatives in improving the participation of persons with disabilities in the workforce. The government for example need to advocate, enhance and promote awareness among the employers in order to change their negative perceptions on persons with disabilities. Apart from that, the current rewards and incentives given to employers who have hired persons with disabilities also need to be revised and relevant with today's context.

Since the employers are looking for candidates with relevant qualifications, skills and the ability to deliver task given, persons with disabilities themselves need to be given equal opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills that make them ready to work. They need to be given equal access to education and training and be given the relevant set of skills that are needed by the industries.

5.4 Limitations of Study and Direction for Future Research

The limitation in qualitative research generally associated with factors such as generalizability of findings. Though these limitations are identified in this study, suggestion for possible research is also been offered.

The sampling frame and procedures employed in this study set some limits on the generalizability of the findings. As this study was exploratory in nature, it was intended

to serve as leading the way for further investigation and future testing on the employers' perception towards persons with disabilities and the employment issues. Since it is not possible to get proper list of employers who are not hiring persons with disabilities, the research is focus on employers that most likely have easy access. This is done through networking approach and a maximum variation sampling method. Though it is intended to have more employers to participate in this study, many are reluctant to participate as they are concerned about the kind of information that they have to provide. Thus, the study only captured perceptions and opinions from ten employers from Klang Valley area.

The current study only captured on the perceptions of employers regarding persons with disabilities and reasons why they are not hiring them. Perhaps in the future, the study could be extended by exploring the issues and challenges that employers faced in hiring and managing persons with disabilities.

In short, despite the limitation in the approach used here and given the exploratory nature of the study, the results provide useful findings that should be of interest both researches and practitioners.

5.5 Conclusion

The main purpose of this qualitative study is to explore employers' perception on hiring persons with disabilities and to understand reasons for not employing them. The results indicate that there is a need to educate employers about persons with disabilities and to change their negative perceptions. At the same time, persons with disabilities also need

to equip themselves with the right skills and knowledge that are needed by the industries.



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APPENDIX A



STUDY ON EMPLOYERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS HIRING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Dear Participant,

You have been selected to participate in our study. The purpose of this study is to explore the current practices in employing people with disability. We would appreciate it if you could share your views regarding the matter. Your feedback will be treated with strict confidence and will be used for the purpose of the study only.

If you have any questions regarding this research, you may address them to me at the contact details below.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Nor Syazwani Binti Mohamed Kamil
Master of Human Resource Management Candidate
Tel: 0129262802
Email: syazwanikamil@gmail.com

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

EMPLOYERS	
NUM	QUESTIONS
1	What is your understanding on persons with disabilities?
2	Does your organization has any policy in hiring persons with disabilities?
3	Why your organization does not employ persons with disabilities?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

EMPLOYERS	
NUM	QUESTIONS
4	Have you ever participated in the Job Coach / Return to Work (SOC SO) program?
5	Are you aware of the government incentives provided to employers who employ persons with disabilities?
6	Do your organization has any intention in the future to hire persons with disabilities? Why? Why not?

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

1. Name of organization: _____

2. Types of industry:

☐

Manufacturing

☐

Retailer

☐

Services

☐

Construction

☐

Agriculture

☐

Transportation

☐

Mining

☐

Others specify: _____

(Please

3. Total number of employees: _____

• Part time: _____

• Full time: _____

4. Location: _____

-----THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION----